

Service Area Strategic Plan

Department of Social Services (765)

Service Area 25 of 33

General Relief (765 491 01)**Description**

This service area is responsible for the cash assistance and services offered to no income and extremely low-income individuals served through the Commonwealth's General Relief Program (GR). GR is an important component of the Commonwealth's social safety net as it serves single individuals and families excluded from participation in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and often not qualified for Medicaid. GR is funded by state and local funds and participation is optional for localities. Participating localities choose among various program components including assistance for medical or dental services, burial assistance and financial assistance to unattached children. GR is financed through State and local funding, and each locality determines how local funds will be used for components they elect to provide to individuals. Agencies may use 100% local funds to meet additional needs. Of the 120 local departments of social services, 103 operate one or more components of the GR program.

Background Information**Mission Alignment and Authority**

- *Describe how this service supports the agency mission*

By assisting needy individuals, the General Relief program assists individuals in triumphing over poverty and shaping strong futures for themselves, their families and communities. The GR program provides assistance to low-income individuals with few other services or resources available to them, assisting each individual to meet their basic human needs and rebuild their lives.

- *Describe the Statutory Authority of this Service*

The Code of Virginia, Section 63.2-802, provides the legal base for this GR program which states that a local board shall exercise its option to establish a program of general relief. A person shall be eligible for such components of the general relief program as the locality chooses to provide if (s)he is in need. Prepaid funeral expenses, which do not exceed an amount established by the State Board of Social Services, shall not be considered a financial asset in determining a person's eligibility for the General Relief Program.

Customers

Agency Customer Group	Customer	Customers served annually	Potential annual customers
Individuals, Children and Families (served unknown; potential unlimited)	Low-income Individuals and Families	2,975	3,000

Anticipated Changes To Agency Customer Base

The number of families receiving General Relief has dropped. This follows the trend of a smaller number of families receiving TANF assistance. Since this is a program with a large local match, some local departments have stopped participating.

Partners

Partner	Description
Federal Government	
Local Departments of Social Services	
State Agencies	

Products and Services

- *Factors Impacting the Products and/or Services:*

Limited funding inhibits the capacity to provide a consistent level of service to low-income Virginians across the Commonwealth. Having different localities offer different levels of service is confusing for the public and customers and raises issues of equity. Additionally, localities often exhaust their funding before the end of the year.

- *Anticipated Changes to the Products and/or Services*

The local share of General Relief funding is 37.5% and local governments have shown difficulty in meeting this level of expenditure. With financial pressures on local government budgets, many localities have reduced or eliminated local General Relief programs and it is anticipated that more localities will reduce the scope of their General Relief program.

- *Listing of Products and/or Services*

- Support of organizations serving communities
- Economic assistance to low-income families/individuals or nutrition, child care, health care eligibility, and financial assistance to low-income families/individuals
- Financial support for children
- Burial assistance for the deceased individual
- Financial assistance for an individual awaiting SSI approval

Finance

- *Financial Overview*

Funding for the General Relief Program is financed by state and local funds. Only the general fund is appropriated in the state budget.

General Relief

- Financial Breakdown*

	Fiscal Year 2009		Fiscal Year 2010	
	General Fund	Nongeneral Fund	General Fund	Nongeneral Fund
Base Budget	\$4,611,421	\$0	\$4,611,421	\$0
Change To Base	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Service Area Total	\$4,611,421	\$0	\$4,611,421	\$0

Service Area Objectives

- Provide access to General Relief (GR) services

Alignment to Agency Goals

- Agency Goal: Maximize the economic independence, safety and stability of individuals and families

Objective Measures

- Average monthly number of individuals receiving assistance through General Relief

Governor's Key:

No

Measure Type:

Output

Measure Frequency:

Annual

Frequency Comment: Average monthly number of individuals receiving GR

Measure Baseline: 3,823 individuals, on average, each month received assistance through General Relief in SFY 2005.

Measure Target: 3,823 individuals, on average, will continue to receive assistance through General Relief by the end of SFY 2010.

Data Source and Calculation: VDSS automated systems